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S E C R E T DJIBOUTI 001470

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CENTCOM FOR ADMIRAL FALLON

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TAGS: [DJ](#) [ER](#) [ET](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [MASS](#)
SUBJECT: DJIBOUTIANS TELL ADMIRAL FALLON USG PRESENCE
SPARKS GROWTH; CALL REGIONAL PEACE AND JOB TRAINING KEYS TO
STABILITY

Classified By: Ambassador W. Stuart Symington for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: Admiral William J. Fallon, Commander, United States Central Command, visited Djibouti December 11-12. Accompanied by the Ambassador and Combined Joint Task Force Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) Commander Hart and staff, Admiral Fallon met with Djiboutian Prime Minister Dileita, with Defense Minister Ougoureh Kifleh Ahmed, and with Chief of Defense, Major General Fathi Ahmed Houssein. He thanked the GODJ officials for their security partnership, sought their views on the region, and congratulated them on Djibouti's economic progress. The Prime Minister praised the CJTF-HOA's role, saying much of Djibouti's growth stemmed from international confidence underpinned by the U.S. presence. He urged the U.S. to sustain its presence here. The MinDef called U.S. military to military relations "impeccable," and extolled the civil affairs work by CJTF-HOA. He hinted that he may leave his position soon "after eight long years." Chief of Defense Fathi agreed relations were mutually beneficial and pitched for additional support. He sought communications equipment, 50 caliber guns for humvees delivered in 2005, and repairs and weapons for recently delivered patrol boats. Admiral Fallon also met with private sector leaders, including two prominent Djiboutian women and the manager of a large American-led enterprise. They told Fallon that the U.S. presence in Djibouti was very positive and praised new investment. They insisted that the challenge was to train Djiboutians to take the new jobs being created so that Djibouti's poor and unemployed see that global outreach improves their lives. End Summary.

12. (S/NF) On December 12, Admiral Fallon met with Djiboutian Prime Minister Dileita Mohamed Dileita. The Admiral emphasized Djibouti's positive role in East Africa, thanked Djibouti for hosting Camp Lemonnier and asked for his views on regional security and Djibouti's priorities. The Prime Minister first praised the USG role here and urged the continued presence of CJTF-HOA. Looking at regional threats,

he called the Horn of Africa "very troubled" and cited two main security concerns: the continued border tensions between Ethiopia and Eritrea, and the ongoing situation in Somalia. He did not believe war would break out on the border, citing the great losses both sides had suffered in the last conflict. When asked if Eritrea were supporting Ethiopian foes with weapons and training, the Prime Minister said yes. Eritrea fuels Ethiopia's opponents with arms and training. That, in turn, raises still further the tensions between the two countries leaders, "close comrades turned bitter rivals." He called a solution difficult to find before one leaves office.

¶3. (S/NF) Turning to Somalia, the Prime Minister insisted the Somalis must stop blaming others and solve their own problems; they must make the decision to live in peace. The situation is increasingly difficult, he warned, especially for Ethiopia. When Admiral Fallon noted that he thought Ethiopia would like to withdraw, the Prime Minister agreed, but said it must not do that now. Djibouti did not want Ethiopia to intervene in Somalia in the first place, but it is now necessary that it stay until the Ethiopian presence can be replaced by other troops, international peacekeepers. He urged increased support for that effort in order to prevent greater conflict.

¶4. (C) Asked about Djibouti's priorities, the Prime Minister said they were poverty reduction, energy, and access to clean water. He noted that Djibouti's unemployment was around 60 percent and talked about the importance of Djibouti's relationships with the U.S. and Dubai and the need for further job creation. He stressed that the U.S. security presence in Djibouti had encouraged other countries to invest in Djibouti, and therefore helped to fuel job growth. He praised the civil affairs work of CJTF-HOA forces, noting

that it was done in tandem with USAID, and said he was pleased the U.S. had put its food aid pre-positioning warehouse in Djibouti. That was an important "vote of confidence" he said. The Admiral agreed that the choice reflected Djibouti's growing capacity and commercial importance.

¶5. (S/NF) Admiral Fallon also met with Djibouti's Minister of Defense and Chief of Defense Fathi Ahmed Houssein. The Minister called the relationship between our countries' military forces "impeccable." He, too, stressed the very positive impact of the U.S. presence in Djibouti, not just in security, but in development. On Somalia, the MinDef said that country had always been unstable, and needed a stronger government. He believed that the problem in Somalia is viewed there as a conflict between Somalia and Ethiopia. Somalia cannot solve that problem by itself, he added. He repeated the Prime Minister's earlier statement that Ethiopia cannot leave now without causing greater instability. Finally, he said that Eritrea is attempting to keep Ethiopia occupied by fueling small areas of tensions, such as the struggle in the Ogaden region.

¶6. (S/NF) General Fathi agreed that the relationship was very positive and, when there are problems, we resolve them collaboratively. When Admiral Fallon asked about current problems, Fathi replied that Djibouti was still waiting to receive M2 .50 caliber machineguns for Humvees delivered in ¶2005. (Note: We received notice today that 14 of the 18 M2 machineguns ordered were likely to be delivered in the next few weeks. End Note) Fathi also noted defects in two new U.S. patrol boats just delivered and stressed that his next priority was to use U.S. assistance to help acquire improved communications equipment.

¶7. (S) The MinDef asked Admiral Fallon for his views on the War in Iraq. The Admiral replied that he had just returned from Iraq and that he had seen significant evidence of increased security in many areas over the past few months. He was able to walk safely this week in areas where our troops had been under frequent attacks within the last year.

The MinDef was grateful for the readout and noted the importance of a continued USG security role in Iraq and in the region. In a brief, final exchange, the MinDef noted that he would not remain long in his post. "Eight long years" was enough, he asserted. The Admiral urged the MinDef to keep working and hoped to see him again soon.

18. (C) In a lively December 11 dinner with Admiral Fallon, attended by CJTF-HOA Commander Admiral Hart and staff, Djiboutian civic and business leaders were warmly positive about the USG role in Djibouti and optimistic that a wave of private investment would help Djiboutians. They warned, however, that a public/private partnership was needed to help Djibouti recast its educational system to train its youth to do those new jobs new being created. The American manager of a 30 million-dollar U.S.-led investment in an industrial salt plant, stressed his commitment to train Djiboutians for skilled jobs in his firm. The head of Djibouti's national research center detailed efforts to overcome shortages of both fresh water and electricity. (Djibouti is likely to desalinate its water in the future. With potential for solar, wind, and geothermal energy, and with a planned interconnection to tap Ethiopia's hydroelectric power, Djibouti could be an alternative energy role model for other countries, but it is dependent now on oil-fired generators.)

19. (S) Comment: The GODJ officials and private sector leaders voiced the view, widely held here, that the USG presence and actions here boost Djibouti's security and feed foreign investor confidence and economic growth. The GODJ,s focus on regional stability and job creation reflects the fact that the main external threat to Djibouti is new regional conflict and the main internal threat is unemployment and hunger. The MinDef,s comment about leaving

soon suggests there may be a cabinet reshuffle, perhaps timed to legislative elections in early 2008. End Comment.

SYMINGTON